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## ***Memory and Identity. Monuments of Romanian Tangible Culture Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List (a Short Presentation)***

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**Abstract:** In recent years the Romanian cultural heritage has been gaining more and more interest from European scholars. It is understandable, since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>th</sup> century is regarded as the moment of the explosion of interest in the subject of heritage and collective memory. Romania, which in the time of Communist regime was a “stronghold” on the border of the East and West, can still boast unknown and unresearched monuments, which provide a lot of new information on Byzantine and post-Byzantine culture, as well as on the cultures of ethnic and religious minorities living in this country.

This article presents the characteristics of cultural heritage management in Romania, as well as the most important institutions dealing with this. Tangible cultural heritage listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites are presented, e.g. the painted orthodox churches and monasteries of Bukovina, the wooden churches of Maramureș, the Dacian Fortresses of the Orăștie Mountains, and the fortified churches in Transylvania. The discourse around these monuments in the Romanian culture is also briefly commented on. It revolves around the ancient settlement myth referring to the Dacian heritage, the orthodox faith understood as fidelity to original Christianity and, gradually, the multicultural heritage of other ethnicities so strongly inhabiting the Romanian territory. It shows that Romania, just like other European countries, has the need to present its history through tangible heritage and emphasizing the Dacian-Roman and Orthodox identity, as well as the need to create new narrative and new post-communist countenance, with a clearly emphasized aspect of a multicultural country inhabited by various ethnicities and religions.

**Key words:** tangible heritage, UNESCO, Romania, Orthodox churches, Dacian fortresses, historic cities, defensive fortresses, identity, collective memory

Cultural heritage of Romania is becoming more and more interesting for the researchers of the topic in Europe.<sup>1</sup> And it is not that peculiar. On the one hand, the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries has been considered an explosion of interest in the area of heritage and collective memory, and, on the other – Romania – a country, which embodied a “guarded fortress” during the communist regime, situated on the border of East and West, can still offer little known and researched monuments providing plenty of knowledge on the Byzantine and post-Byzantine culture as well as on cultures of ethnic and religious minorities dwelling there. In spite of the fact that during the Nicolae Ceaușescu rule the national policy was carefully designed to purposely annihilate tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the region, a considerable number of Romanian scientists strived to preserve as much of it as it was possible within the structure of the regime. Architecture and Romanian art as well as spiritual culture were, however, vastly impoverished by the communist times, losing numerous priceless monuments, many of them dating back to Middle Ages. Part of the remaining tangible heritage is still not labeled/described and renovated, and even left to decay in provinces located far away from the capital, where appropriate research and specialist institutions applying for EU or national funding are a scarcity.

After the fall of the communist regime Romanians began to use distinct symbols to formulate a specific collective memory of the time and the related loss of many cultural heritage monuments. The now non-existent Văcărești Monastery in Bucharest became a symbol of communism and the time of cultural heritage annihilation. It used to be one of the greatest historical monuments of the country and one of the greatest Orthodox Churches of the Middle-Eastern Europe. The place of worship, built in the famous Brâncovenesc style in the years 1716–1736 by Hospodar Nicholas Mavrocordatos (1680–1730) and his son Constantine (1711–1769), was demolished in 1984 during the practical implementation of the Nicolae Ceaușescu's (1918–1989) insane politics involving devastation of old religious monuments across the country.<sup>2</sup> It may be assumed that by invoking this symbol, Romanians began a public debate on cultural heritage.<sup>3</sup> The media, new media and the science world took up the subject of great symbols found within the domain of national heritage. They were supported by physical actions undertaken within

<sup>1</sup> The publication is based on the article: E. Kocój, *Pamięć i tożsamość. Zabytki kultury materialnej z Listy światowego dziedzictwa UNESCO w Rumunii (krótka prezentacja tematu)*, “Zarządzanie w Kultuże”, 2014, Vol. 3, pp. 303–319.

<sup>2</sup> G. Leahu, *Distrugerea mănăstirii Văcărești*, București 1996; *Mănăstirii Văcărești*, <http://www.crestinortodox.ro/biserici-manastiri/manastirea-vacaresti-87587.html> [accessed on: 2 September 2013].

<sup>3</sup> G. Cârstea, *The Văcărești Monastery, between reconstruction and oblivion*, [http://www.masonicforum.ro/?cmd=displaystory&story\\_id=508&format=html](http://www.masonicforum.ro/?cmd=displaystory&story_id=508&format=html) [accessed on: 3 April 2014].

the culture and aimed at drawing attention of Romanian society to tangible heritage annihilated during communism. One of those events encompassed preparing a special exhibition in the National Museum of Romanian Art (*Muzeul Național de Artă al României*) in Bucharest, which held ruins – exhibits of the Văcărești monastery,<sup>4</sup> as well as a special exhibition devoted to the time of communism, held at the Museum of the Romanian Peasant (*Muzeul Național al Țăranului Român*) called *Disease* and presenting debris of tangible cultural heritage.

Since the 1990s and the fall of communism, Romanians undertook many actions in order to secure, label and renovate their tangible cultural heritage.<sup>5</sup> Already in the year 1990, under the decree No. 187/1990, Romania signed the UNESCO convention (Paris 1970) *on the preservation of the world cultural and natural heritage*. The organization provided equipment for labeling/describing, renovating, and first of all revitalizing and conserving monuments damaged during the time of the communist system. In the next few years, Romanian government passed new legal acts relating to the topic of heritage – in the year 1993 *The Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* (Paris 1970) was adopted. A very important step, as so far many of the historical monuments were not sufficiently secure and were continuously being pillaged by dealers. In 2005, by adopting new legal means, Romania joined the countries observing the Paris 2003 UNESCO convention on the *Protection of intangible cultural heritage*, quickly attempting to describe and organize traditional customs and rites still present on the land, however, in fact, very rarely practiced. It was an important measure, because Romanians, although bearing an ambivalent attitude towards folk culture, expansively glorified during the Ceaușescu regime, are still very much attached to folk traditions, which, for a part of society, dwelling in the country or originating in folk culture, is continuously a source of pride and identity, alive in the annual or family ritual cycles. In the same year Romanian government signed the UNESCO *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*, Paris 2005. In the year 2007 Romania adopted the international *Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage* passed by UNESCO in 2001.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Muzeul Național de Artă al României, Galeria Națională – Lapidariu, <http://www.mnar.arts.ro/Lapidariu> [accessed on: 6 March 2014].

<sup>5</sup> Romania, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/ro> [accessed on: 2 September 2013]; L. Miu, E. Badea, *Research form conservation and restoration of movable cultural heritage. Advanced techniques leather and parchment. The Romanian case*, [http://exchange.kumid.eu/pdf/miu\\_and\\_badea.pdf](http://exchange.kumid.eu/pdf/miu_and_badea.pdf) [accessed on: 1 May 2013].

<sup>6</sup> Patrimoniul – prezențe românești pe listele Patrimoniului Mondial material și imaterial, <http://www.mae.ro/node/1614> [accessed on: 1 May 2014].

The rules, monuments and the preservation of cultural heritage in Romania were supervised by special institutions, some of them bearing different legal standings, called up by government authorities, as well as third sector or private entities. The greatest legal authority in this respect is held by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (*Ministerului Culturii și Patrimoniului Național*) established in 2010 due to reorganization of the former Ministry of Culture, Religions and National Heritage.<sup>7</sup> Its mission encompasses care for Romanian cultural heritage, including passing legal acts concerning heritage, drawing up lists of tangible and intangible heritage items, preserving and funding cultural heritage monuments (e.g. by deciding on financing priority projects), calling up committees involved with heritage as well as organization of national committees' work related to museums and exhibitions.<sup>8</sup> The heritage preserving actions undertaken by the ministry are supported by a number of assisting institutions, such as The National Heritage Institute (*Ministerului Culturii și Patrimoniului Național*) founded in 2011.<sup>9</sup> The tasks of the Institute include accounting for research, expertise and cultural monuments renovation funding, supporting and recommending new projects to the ministry related to the renovation and revitalization of the features as well as recommending new legislative acts on the issue of heritage. The CIMEC Institute is one of entities operating within its structures. It was established in 2011 as a result of restructuring the former Institute of Cultural Memory (*Institutul de Memorie Culturală*) involved in collecting, processing, storing and distributing information on movable and immovable cultural heritage, repertory theatre, supporting cultural institutions as well as private individuals in taking actions within the scope of culture, administering domestic databases of national heritage, coordinating documentation of heritage as well as issuing paper and digital publications on the subject.<sup>10</sup> The abovementioned actions are also supported by self-government institutions of respective regions, among others some very popular district centres, active in urban areas across the country. Moreover, all the legally acknowledged religions in Romania are in support of these engagements. They use funds gained from international, governmental and private organizations to finance research and renovations of sacral heritage in the country.

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<sup>7</sup> *Hotărâre nr. 90 din 10/02/2010, privind organizarea și functionarea Ministerului Culturii și Patrimoniului Național*, <http://mail.cultura.ro/cultura/uploads/files/HG-90-2010-MCPN.pdf> [accessed on: 10 February 2014].

<sup>8</sup> *Ministerul Culturii*, <http://www.cultura.ro/> [accessed on: 4 June 2014].

<sup>9</sup> *Institutul Național al Patrimoniului*, <http://patrimoniu.gov.ro/ro/> [accessed on: 10 June 2014]; *HOTĂRÂRE nr. 593 din 8 iunie 2011 privind organizarea și funcționarea Institutului Național al Patrimoniului*, <http://patrimoniu.gov.ro/ro/hg-593> [accessed on: 10 June 2014].

<sup>10</sup> *CIMEC*, <http://www.cimec.ro/DespreCIMEC/Scurta-Prezentare.html> [accessed on: 10 June 2014].



The painted Church of St. George, Voronet (XV c.), Romania

Photo: Marian Hanik

Browsing the inventory of the most representative monuments across the country, it is worth to have a closer look at the items listed there and see what discourse can be found behind the cultural heritage list of UNESCO in Romania. The debate on cultural heritage, which originated in the 1990s, as well as UNESCO listings of monuments, which followed as its aftermath, present a significant discourse concerning identity and collective memory pursued by Romania after the other European and non-European countries. It is indeed understood that heritage and what we deem to be heritage (if such a phenomenon exists at all and is not only a construct created by a certain social group in a certain period of time) is not an innocent term and its discourses are dependent on the politics of the time and region. This fact was recently drawn to attention by Krzysztof Kowalski, who emphasized that the expression “cultural heritage” as well as actions and connotations related to it emerged very unexpectedly gaining immense popularity. They also became a tool for past reinterpretations, quite often dependent on particular interests of social groups.<sup>11</sup>

Until the year 2004 seven groups of tangible monuments were placed on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage list. One of them was a natural

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<sup>11</sup> K. Kowalski, *O istocie dziedzictwa europejskiego. Rozważania*, Kraków 2013, *passim*.

(environmental) monument, representing a specific multicultural region, but also boasting interesting, still preserved monuments of material culture and folk traditions. Romanians began listing tangible heritage monuments with painted churches and monasteries located in the northeast part of the country, called Southern Bukovina. It is not surprising as these sanctuaries encompass a unique complex of buildings dating back to the time of the late Middle Ages, founded by the greatest Moldavian Hospodars, accomplished in politics, religion and culture. In 1993, the UNESCO list obtained eight entries of monuments located in small Moldavian villages. These eight churches are among a few dozen sanctuaries founded in the 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>12</sup> Three of them are churches dating back to the times of Stefan the Great (1457–1504): the Church of the Elevation of the Holy Cross (*Biserica Înălțarea Sfântei Cruce*) in **Pătrăuți**, founded by Hospodar in 1487, painted with polychrome in the first part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>13</sup>, the Church of St. George (*Biserica Sfântul Gheorghe*) in **Voroneț** dating back to 1488, painted with interior polychrome in 1489 and exterior paintings in the times of Peter Rareș, and The Church of Beheading St. John the Baptist in **Arbore**, founded by the Logofet Luca Arbore in 1502, painted with interior polychrome in the years 1502–1504 and in 1541 the exterior polychrome was painted by the Master Dragoș Coman.<sup>14</sup> The remaining churches inscribed on the UNESCO list come from the times of Peter Rareș (1527–1538 and 1541–1546), a great benefactor of Moldavian culture. Two of them were founded by the Hospodar himself: the Church of the Holy Virgin Annunciation (*Biserica Buna Vestire Maicii Domnului*) in **Vatra Moldoviței** founded right next to the old site of religious cult by Hospodar Peter Rareș in 1532, painted with polychrome in 1537, and The Church of St. Nicholas (*Biserica Sfântul Nicolae*) in **Proboata**, founded by Peter Rareș in 1530, painted with polychrome in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup> The third church – The Church of Assumption of Mother of God (*Biserica Adormirea Maicii Domnului*) in **Humor** was founded by the Logofet Toader Bubuioag in the year 1530. It was painted with polychrome in 1542 by Toma of Suceava and his workers.

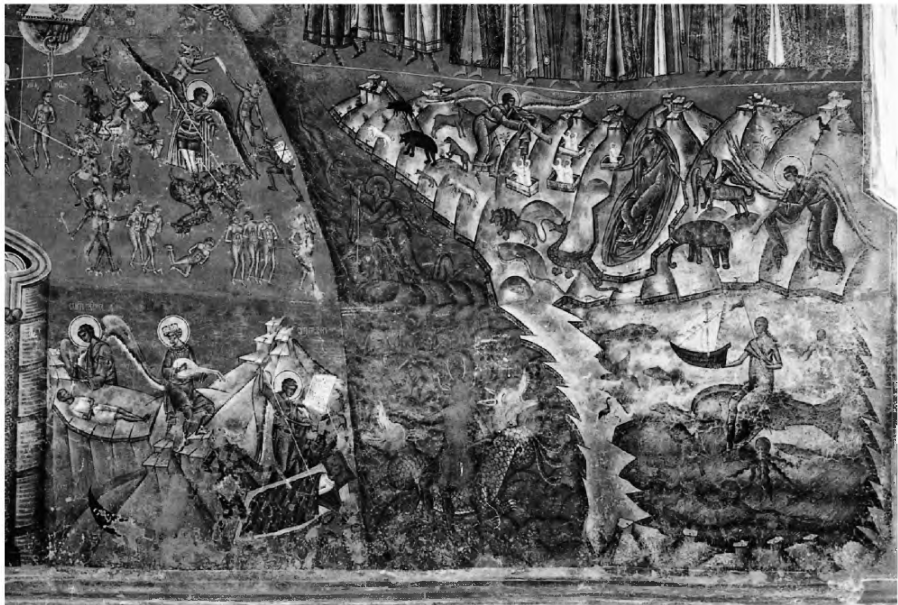
<sup>12</sup> I. Crăciunaș Suceveanul, "Bisericile cu pictură exterioară din Moldova (I)," *Mitropolia Moldovei și Suceavei* 1969, No. 7–9, pp. 406–444; I. Crăciunaș Suceveanul, "Bisericile cu pictură exterioară din Moldova (II)," *Mitropolia Moldovei și Suceavei* 1970, No. 3–6, pp. 133–153; E. Kocój, *Świątynie, postacie, ikony. Malowane cerkwie i monastypy Bukowiny Południowej w wyobrażeniach rumuńskich*, Kraków 2006, pp. 47–49.

<sup>13</sup> G. Herea, P. Palamar, *Pătrăuți*, Suceava 2011, p. 19.

<sup>14</sup> V. Drăguț, *Dragoș Coman – le maître des fresques d'Arbore*, București 1968.

<sup>15</sup> V. Pușcașu, *Actul de ctitorie ca fenomen istoric în Țara Românească și Moldova până la sfârșitul secolului al. XVIII-lea*, București 2001, p. 343.

The painted Church of the Holy Virgin  
Annunciation, Vatra Moldoviței (XVI c.),  
Romania  
Photo: Marian Hanik



Voronet (XV c.), Romania  
Photo: Marian Hanik

There are two more churches from the 16<sup>th</sup> century listed in the UNESCO records: the Church of St. George (*Biserica Sfântul Gheorghe*) in **Suceava**, built in the years 1514–1522 as a metropolitan cathedral by Hospodar Bogdan III (1504–1517) and his son Ștefăniț Vodă (1517–1527) painted with exterior and interior polychrome at the same time. In 2010 the list was joined by the Lord's Resurrection Monastery (*Biserica Învierea Domnului*) in **Sucevița**, founded by the renowned Movilești family at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, painted with polychrome in 1601.<sup>16</sup>

The painted churches and monasteries of contemporary Southern Bukovina are considered by both the researchers, and Romanians themselves to be the most significant and representative monuments of Moldavian art. The exceptional value of these structures is on the one hand related to the fact that they are a well-organized complex of buildings representing the architecture, style and iconography of the Eastern Orthodox Church in the 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries characterized by a few distinguishable features. The type of church is generally built on the longitudinal rectangular plan, frequently mitral or tripartite with a single apse, or more often, a triple apse and a distinct dome growing into a tower. The entire structure is built facing eastward.<sup>17</sup> Individual parts of the church are usually composed of the altar apse, most frequently a rectangular nave, and are often surrounded by two side apses and a rectangular or square pre-nave. Churches are also distinct due to a specific arrangement of Moldavian vaults, made from domes placed on pendentives, high, steep hip roof topped with a tower usually located above the nave, often covered with a separate roof in some part (the so-called divided roof) as well as special decorative elements created by niches and recesses within the apses or profiled portals and windows surrounding the entire church.<sup>18</sup> An exceptional value that contributed to listing the churches in the UNESCO register is the system of wall ornamentation. It is especially evident on the polychromed exterior walls covering the entire church on the outside. Facade frescoes represent complicated and profound theological message of the Orthodox Faith. They refer to biblical canon, teachings of the Church Fathers, Jewish and Christian apocrypha as well as liturgical texts of Orthodoxy, hagiography and eschatology. It is the reason why the iconographical program of

<sup>16</sup> V. Brătulescu, "Pictura Suceviței și datarea ei," *Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei* 1964, No. 5–6, pp. 206–228.

<sup>17</sup> W. Podlacha, *Malowidla ścienne w cerkwiach Bukowiny*, Lwów 1912, p. 22; T. Chrzanowski, "Sztuka Moldawii," in: R. Brykowski, T. Chrzanowski, M. Kornecki (eds.), *Sztuka Rumunii*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1979, pp. 68–97.

<sup>18</sup> G. Baș, "Inceputurile arhitecturii bisericești din Moldova. Discurs cu răspus de Al. Lapedatu," *Cultură Națională*, Academia Română, Discursuri de recepțiune, LX, București 1924; G. Baș, *Bisericele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, București 1926; G. Baș, *Bisericele și mănăstirile moldovenesti din veacul al XVI-lea*, București 1928; T. Chrzanowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 72–73.



these sanctuaries, sporadically and fragmentarily used in different regions of Orthodoxy, is unique on the world-wide scale.

Registering the painted churches on the UNESCO monuments' list is also related to a specific discourse that emerged around them in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They became a proof of continuity in Romanian Principalities' sovereignty, battles the greatest Moldavian Hospodars led with foreign enemies threatening the Principality (e.g. Turks, Tartars, Poles), one of the oldest evidence of Christianity that emerged on the Romanian land as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, as well as faithfulness of Romanians to Orthodoxy, which was threatened during building churches by spreading competitive religions such as Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism and Armenian Church. Specific mythology that has arisen around these monuments presents the greatest heroes of the community in Romanian culture as well as who was an *alien* and who was a *brother* within it.<sup>19</sup>

The second group of monuments connected to the Orthodox heritage, inscribed on the UNESCO list in 1993, is the monastery complex of Horezu, located in Vâlcea region. It was founded in the years 1690–1693 by Hospodar Constantin Brâncoveanu (1654–1714). The complex includes The Church of the Holy Emperors Constantin and his Mother Helena (*Sfinții Împărați Constantin și mama sa Elena*). It had been built by Master Manea accompanied by his helpers: Istrate, Vucașin Caragea, Bade and Apostol.<sup>20</sup> In the years 1692–1694 the murals were decorated by a team of painters, including Greeks: Constantin and Ioan as well as local painters: Andrei, Stanm Neagoe and Ichim.<sup>21</sup> Polychrome presents some of the most important scenes of Orthodox theology as well as original and quite large portraits of Brâncoveanu, Besarabians and Cantacuzin family founders. Inside the church we can find a wooden iconostas, founded by Hospodar Maria Brâncoveanu (?–1729). The monastic complex also includes The Dormition of the Mother of God Church of Infirmary (*Biserica Bolniță Adormirea Maicii Domnului*), founded by Hospodar Maria in the years 1696–1699, the Hermitage of the Saints Apostles (*Schitul Sfinților Apostoli*), erected in 1698 and painted by hierodeacon Iosif and Ioan in 1700, the Hermitage of Saint Stephen (*Schitul Sfântul Ștefan*), built in 1703, founded by Constantin Brâncoveanu and family and painted by Ianache, Istrate and Harinte, as well as the Church of the Holy

<sup>19</sup> E. Kocój, "Malowane cerkwie i monastypy moldawskie w XV i XVI wieku. Zarys problematyki", in: J. Gwoździk, R. Witkowski, A.M. Wyrwa (eds.), *Klasztory mnisze na wschodnich terenach dawnej Rzeczypospolitej od XVI do początków XX wieku*, Poznań 2013, pp. 215–239.

<sup>20</sup> C. Popa, *Monumente medievale din Oltenia*, București 2011, p. 133.

<sup>21</sup> N. Iorga, "Hârtii din Arhiva Mănăstirii Hurezului precum și din a Protopopiei Argeșului și a altor neamuri găsite în casele proprietății din Brâncoveni," *Studii și documente cu privire la istoria românilor* XIV, București 1907, p. 4, <http://www.unibuc.ro/CLASSICA/hurezu/cuprins.htm> [accessed on: 10 May 2014].

Angels (*Biserica Sfinții Îngeri*), founded in 1700 and covered with murals in 1757 on the commission of Dionisie Bălăcescu.<sup>22</sup> Taking into account all of the above mentioned criteria UNESCO designated the Horezu monastery a World Heritage Site, as one of the greatest monastic monuments erected in South-Eastern Europe at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, an example of a renowned artistic Brâncovenesc style as well as a great cultural centre including a famous library and painting school operating within the monastery in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup> They also point to complicated fate of The Wallachian Principality and their relations/dependence on the Osman Empire. They remind us of the times the Principalities were enslaved, the death of the ruler-founder deceived to go into Constantinople, where he was tortured for his alliance with Russia and upon the order of Ottoman Ahmed III died in martyrdom with his close relatives. The Romanian Orthodox Church declared him a saint in 1992,<sup>24</sup> depicting him as a martyr who refused to convert to Islam even when his life was in danger of being terminated. He is also considered to be a great patron of sacral art, as well as a founder of a number of monuments and religious artefacts in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Ancient Dacian fortresses located in the Orăștie mountains (*Fortărețe antice dacice din munții Orăștie*) covering an area of one hundred and fifty square kilometers bear an exceptional value in the search for origins and lineage of Romanians. Some of them were discovered at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when, influenced by the powerful ideas of national unity based on Romanian roots lying in Dacia,<sup>25</sup> thanks to the efforts of the Austrian Government, there began a search for the ancient Dacian capital – the city Sarmizegetusa.<sup>26</sup>

The research was then continued in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to find Dacian artefacts corresponding to the founding myth of Romanian nation. The objects found clearly correspond to the following events: the Roman origins of Romanians, the presence of Dacian country in antiquity and the existence of Decebel – the King of Dacians, a unifying force behind Dacian tribes

<sup>22</sup> *Catalog bisericii horezene*, Horezu 2012, pp. 4–29.

<sup>23</sup> *Mănăstirea Horezu*, <http://www.cimec.ro/Monumente/UNESCO/UNESCOro/Album/Horezu/Horezu/Horezu.htm> [accessed on: 23 May 2014].

<sup>24</sup> J. Charkiewicz, E. Kocój, *Święci rumuńscy*, Hajnówka 2012, pp. 109–114.

<sup>25</sup> To find out more on the subject of Romanian historiography and the birth of the new cultural paradigm in the 19<sup>th</sup> century see: L. Boia, *Rumuni – świadomość, mity, historia*, Kraków 2003; K. Jurczak, *Dylematy zmiany. Pisarze rumuńscy XIX wieku wobec ideologii zachowawczej. Studium przypadku*, Kraków 2012.

<sup>26</sup> *Cetatea Sarmizegetusa*, <http://www.cetateasarmizegetusa.ro/istoric.html> [accessed on: 29 May 2014]; *Cetățile Dacice din Munții Orăștiei. Anul înscrierii 1999, COD 906*, <http://patrimoniului.gov.ro/ro/monumente-istorice/lista-patrimoniului-mondial-unesco/17-monumente-istorice/unesco/92-cetatile-dacice-din-muntii-orastiei> [accessed on: 3 July 2014]; Ł. Galusek, M. Jurecki, *Rumunia. Przestrzeń, sztuka, kultura*, Olszanica 2008, p. 18.



Ancient Dacian fortresses, Orăștie mountains

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Sarmizegetusa\\_Regia?uselang=pl#/media/File:Sanctuar\\_mare\\_circular.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Sarmizegetusa_Regia?uselang=pl#/media/File:Sanctuar_mare_circular.JPG) [accessed on: 10 June 2015].

and great warrior who did not fear Roman Emperors. Archeological research helped discover six fortresses – the most significant one is the Sarmizegetusa Regia erected on top of a 1,200 meter high mountain in Grădiștea de Munte village, considered to be the Dacian capital, strategic centre of power and site of religious cult with temples that are still preserved. It was possibly erected during the rule of the Dacian King Burebista (1<sup>st</sup> century AD) and destroyed in 106 AD during the war the last King of Dacians, Decebel (87–106), led with the Romans.<sup>27</sup> The remaining fortresses probably date back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC up to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and were built in high mountains as defense fortresses for Romans.<sup>28</sup> *Cetatea Luncani – Piatra Roșie* is one of them, located in Bosorod village on an 832 meter mountain, active from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and thought to be the last bastion of Dacian defense. The city was surrounded by double fortifications – the exterior wall, which was stronger and larger than the smaller, interior one built from stone, wood and soil. Within the city one can find ruins of military buildings, outhouses

<sup>27</sup> *Draco – chipurile de piatră*, directed by O. Repede, Romania 2012, DVD, <http://draco-film.blogspot.com/> [accessed on: 6 July 2014].

<sup>28</sup> *Luncani – Piatra Roșie*, [http://www.mcdr.ro/?page\\_id=2785](http://www.mcdr.ro/?page_id=2785) [accessed on: 1 July 2014]; M. Captaian, *Multi cercetători occidentali vin și își rup mașinile prin Munții Orăștiei ca să vada cetățile dacice*, <http://www.formula-as.ro/2010/924/planete-culturale-30/multi-cercetatori-occidentali-vin-si-isi-rup-masinile-prin-muntii-orastiei-ca-sa-vada-cetatile-dacice-12598> [accessed on: 23 May 2014].

and households as well as a stone place of worship. The next two fortresses are located in the Costești village. Costești-Blidaru is situated at the elevation of 750 mamsl, and was in the past surrounded by powerful fortifications and towers. Costești-Cetățuie, located at 514 mamsl, is possibly the oldest of the fortresses.<sup>29</sup> The last two strongholds: Căpâlna and Bănița we know the least about. Presently research conducted on Dacian fortresses is in the process of being broadened and coordinated by the Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilization in Deva (*Muzeul Civilizației Dacice și Romane Deva*).<sup>30</sup> The citadels are a well-thought complex of defense fortresses located on mountaintops with separate watchtowers. The architectural style of structures is quite specific and as it employs Hellenic and Celtic elements with a local twist, it has been called *murus dacicus* by Romanian researchers since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The style features a double exterior wall and cladding made from large stone blocks and reinforced with earth, gravel and wooden logs.<sup>31</sup>

The fourth group of monuments are wooden churches located in the site of historical Maramureș, inscribed on the UNESCO list in 1999. At present there are eight of them, which does not make it a large number in comparison to all the other preserved wooden churches across Romania. Most of them were founded together with the erection of prestigious wooden houses built within 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries by families of local country notables.<sup>32</sup>

Some of them were founded by Orthodox believers and after the union with Catholic Church in Transylvania in 1699, also by Greek Catholics. The churches present a characteristic structure. They consist of the altar part, nave and pre-nave, which is often separated from other parts by a wooden wall with hewed out windows or metal bars. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century many of them were decorated with interior polychrome and the iconographical program of these sanctuaries included some important contemporary events apart from the significant theological content. It is especially vivid in the composition of *the Last Judgment*, where some of the damned nations include: Turks, Tartars, Jewish, Armenians, Arabs as well as French and Germans.<sup>33</sup> Part of the

<sup>29</sup> Programul Multianual de Cercetări Arheologice din Munții Orăștiei, finanțat de către Ministerul Culturii din România și coordonat de către Muzeul Național de Istorie a Transilvaniei din Cluj-Napoca, <http://www.cetati-dacice.ro> [accessed on: 3 July 2014].

<sup>30</sup> Muzeul Civilizației Dacice și Romane Deva, [http://www.mcdr.ro/?page\\_id=2785](http://www.mcdr.ro/?page_id=2785) [accessed on: 3 July 2014].

<sup>31</sup> *Murus dacicus*, [http://www.encyclopedia-dacica.ro/?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=773&Itemid=452](http://www.encyclopedia-dacica.ro/?option=com_content&view=article&id=773&Itemid=452) [accessed on: 5 July 2014].

<sup>32</sup> A. Baboș, *Tracing a Sacred Building Tradition, Wooden Churches, Carpenters and Founders in Maramureș until the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century*, Norrköping 2004, *passim*.

<sup>33</sup> E. Kocój, "The damned of the Last Judgment or what the Romanians paint in the Orthodox icons (historical and contemporary cultural contexts)," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, Vol. 12, Issue 35 (Summer 2013), pp. 86–108.



Sarmizegetusa Regia, Ancient Dacian fortresses, Orăștie mountains

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Sarmizegetusa\\_Regia?uselang=pl#/media/File:-Sanctuar\\_mare\\_circular.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Sarmizegetusa_Regia?uselang=pl#/media/File:-Sanctuar_mare_circular.JPG) [accessed on: 10 June 2015].

murals was painted by the same artist – Aleksandru Ponehalschi, considered to be a great and important artistic individual in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Maramureș. We have not discovered many details of his life as almost no research sources about this artist are available. Based on the sound of his name, most of researchers associate his origins with Poland.<sup>34</sup> In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the painter settled in Maramureș, and was very artistically active within the post-Byzantine tradition. He possibly also held a wayfaring workshop there.<sup>35</sup> Aleksandru was a mural artist as well as a painter of movable icons – many of them became a part of the wooden churches in Maramureș.<sup>36</sup> He completed painting representations in places such as Călinești-Căeni, Berbești, Budești-Susani, Sârbi-Susani, Desești, Ieud-Deal, which are deemed not only to be the most important monuments of religious art, but also excellent examples reflecting the cultural changes of mentality as well as singularities in thinking of the epoch.

<sup>34</sup> M. Porumb, *Un veac de pictură românească din Transilvania, sec. XVIII*, București 2003, p. 98; M. Porumb, *Dicționar de pictură veche românească din Transilvania, sec. XIII–XVIII*, București 1998, p. 295.

<sup>35</sup> A. Pop-Bratu, *Pictura murală maramureșeană*, București 1982, p. 23.

<sup>36</sup> R. Betea, *Biserica de lemn din Desești. The Wooden Church in Desești. L'eglise en bois de Desești*, Cluj-Napoca 2007; R. Betea, *Tâmpla bisericii de lemn din Desești*, [www.istorie.uab.ro/publicatii/colectia\\_bcsc/bcss\\_14/5\\_raluca\\_betea.pdf](http://www.istorie.uab.ro/publicatii/colectia_bcsc/bcss_14/5_raluca_betea.pdf) [accessed on: 15 May 2014].



St. Nicholas Church in Budești-Susani (XVII c.)

Photo: Ewa Kocój

The UNESCO world heritage list also includes structures dating back to the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, e.g. St. Nicholas Church in Budești-Susani, founded in 1628, decorated with polychrome in 1760 on the commission of Popa Ionaș by Aleksandru Ponehalschi.<sup>37</sup> Paintings inside the church bear the “small miniatures” style, are very expressive and are inscribed in both: Romanian and *Slavona* languages. Other churches from the same period include: Poienile Izei, built in 1632, painted with interior murals in 1794 by a local artist, possibly Gheorghe from Dragomirești<sup>38</sup> and the Church of St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel in Rogoz (Lăpuș land) erected by the village dwellers in 1785, probably following the invasion of Tartars (1661), painted in 1785 by Radu Munteanu and Nicolae Man de la Poiana Porcului.<sup>39</sup>

Two beautiful churches with a uniquely painted program had been preserved from the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. First of them – Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, located in Bârsana, was built in the valley of Iza around 1711 by clergyman Ioan Ștefanca and the village dwellers in gratitude

<sup>37</sup> G. Man, *Biserici de lemn din Maramureș*, Baia Mare 2007, pp. 80–84.

<sup>38</sup> I. Pop, *Biserica “Sf. Cuvioasă Paraschiva” din Poienile Izei*, Iași 2008, p. 14; G. Man, *op. cit.*, pp. 268–271.

<sup>39</sup> *Biserica Sf. Arhangheli (Rogoz)*, [www.cimec.ro/Monumente/unesco/UNESCOro/Album/BisLemn/Rogoz/Rogoz.htm](http://www.cimec.ro/Monumente/unesco/UNESCOro/Album/BisLemn/Rogoz/Rogoz.htm) [accessed on: 3 June 2014].



The Last Judgment icon  
(XVIII c.), St. Nicholas  
Church in Budești-Susani  
Photo: Ewa Kocój

for a miraculous salvage from cholera epidemics spreading in the vicinity. The church was moved to a different location twice – circa 1979, following the Tartars' attack and about 1742 after another epidemics of cholera. In 1806 it had been painted (or re-painted) by the artist Toader Ponora (Hodora) from Vișeu-de-Mijloc and Ioan Plohod from Vladimirești. The iconographic program included scenes from the Old and New Testament and a representation of the Last Judgment, enormous in size.<sup>40</sup> The other – The Church of the Birth of the Holy Virgin (*Nașterea Maicii Domnului*) from Ieud Deal was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the local family of Balea. It is possible that its foundation was connected to the invasion of Tartars in the region in 1717. Polychrome, probably painted by Aleksandru Ponehalschi in 1782, consists of an abundant iconographic program presenting scenes of the Last Judgment, Old and New Testaments and images of patriarchs: Alexy of Moscow and Peter of Kiev.<sup>41</sup>

The Church of St. Archangels in Șurdești dates back to the second half of 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was erected by Master Ioan Macarie in 1772 for the Greek Catholic congregation. In 1783 it was decorated with murals by Masters Stefan and Stan and their apprentices.<sup>42</sup> At roughly the same time the wooden Greek Catholic Church of St. Paraskieva in Desești was founded. The structure had been built in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (probably circa 1770) in the valley of the Mara River, placed in the west part of the village,

<sup>40</sup> G. Man, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 192–196.

<sup>42</sup> G. Man, *op. cit.*, pp. 362–365.

nearby the cemetery.<sup>43</sup> The interior of the temple was decorated with frescoes in 1780, however, the question for the name of the author has not been answered until today. Some researchers claim that it was painted with polychrome by two artists – Radu Munteanu from Ungureni (Tara Lapisilui) and his assistant Gheorghe Zugravu, upon the request of the village women and with their remuneration.<sup>44</sup> Others associate it with Aleksandru Ponehalschi based on the stylistic and formal analysis of the art.<sup>45</sup> The last church of this period is the Church of St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel in Plopiș-Sisești, erected in 1796–1798 by the village inhabitants. In 1811 it was covered with polychrome by painter Stefen from Sisești and its program included the representation of Genesis, martyrdom and crucifixion of Christ, The Holy Trinity and the scenes of St. John's Apocalypse.<sup>46</sup> The same artist is probably the author of wooden movable icons remaining in the iconostas and inside the church, representing e.g., *prazdniki*, the personages of the Holy Virgin, as well as Christ depicted in various iconographic types and saints.

The wooden churches of Maramureș bear a special importance for Romanians – they had been created in an exceptional space – in the region of the historic Maramureș. This fact confirms as well as transforms the primary founding myth, indicating not only Dacian origins of the nation, but also original affiliation of Transylvania to Romania. They show that historical lands of Maramureș were inhabited by Romanians, who practiced the Orthodox rite. What is more, wooden churches prove the “genius” of unknown Romanian peasants, who created an **arcadia of their own** including peasants, beautiful and untouched landscape as well as the Orthodox faith.<sup>47</sup>

The two further groups of monuments refer to the multicultural heritage of Romania. The fourth group of monuments is comprised of fortified Saxon churches in Transylvania (*Biserici fortificate săsești din Transilvania*) inscribed on the UNESCO list in 1993 and 1999. They are a testimony to the multiculturalism of the country, however, these days only a phantom of once substantial presence of German minority, who had been settling on Ro-

<sup>43</sup> T. Bud, *Date istorice despre protopopiatele, parohiile și mănăstirile române din Maramureș din timpurile vechi și până în anul 1911*, Gherla 1911, p. 41; J. Patterson, *Wooden Churches of the Carpathians. A Comparative Study*, New York 2001, p. 105; *Biserica “Sfânta Paraschiva” (Desești)*, <http://www.cimec.ro/Monumente/UNESCO/UNESCOro/Album/BisLemn/Desesti/Desesti.htm> [accessed on: 3 June 2014].

<sup>44</sup> A. Pop-Bratu, *Precizări în legătură cu activitatea unor zugravi de tradiție postbizantină în Maramureșul istoric*, in: *Pagini de veche artă românească*, Institutul de Istoria Artei, București, IV, 1981, p. 117; R. Betea, *Țîmpla bisericii de lemn din Desești*, [http://istorie.uab.ro/publicatii/colectia\\_bcsc/bcss.../5\\_raluca\\_betea.pdf](http://istorie.uab.ro/publicatii/colectia_bcsc/bcss.../5_raluca_betea.pdf) [accessed on: 15 July 2011].

<sup>45</sup> A. Pop-Bratu, *op. cit.*, pp. 90–120.

<sup>46</sup> A. Baboș, *Three Centuries of Carpentering Churches, a Chronological Approach to the Sacred Wooden Architecture of Maramureș*, Lund 2000.

<sup>47</sup> T. Baconsy, *Biserici de lemn din Maramureș*, Segovia 2009.





The Church of St. Archangels in Șurdești (XVIII c.)  
Photo: Marian Hanik

manian lands since the 12<sup>th</sup> century to protect the south-eastern frontiers of Hungarian monarchy.<sup>48</sup> Turkish invasions, intensifying towards the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, made Saxons defend their dwellings with an advised system of heavy fortifications, surrounding the inhabited area and allowing for defensive actions. Fortified Protestant churches of enormous sizes were also used as defense measures. Among the three hundred churches erected by German settlers in the 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and circa one hundred and fifty preserved until today, so far the UNESCO organization designated seven. The eldest ones date back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. An example of one is The Prejmer (Tortein/Tartlau) Cathedral located in the region of Brașov. The structure was started by Teutonic Knights, and after their exile completed by the Saxon congregation or Cistercians, perhaps around the 1280. In the 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries the Cathedral was remodelled and surrounded with solid fortification walls.<sup>49</sup> The interior of the temple holds an altar in the form of a triptych completed by an unknown author from circa 1450. The middle part presents the crucifixion of Christ and the sides depict his martyrdom.

<sup>48</sup> H. Derer, *Bisericile fortificate ale Sașilor din Transilvania*, in: A. Ioan, H. Derer (eds.), *Bisericile fortificate ale Sașilor din Transilvania*, București 2004, p. 11.

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.biserici.org/index.php?menu=BI&code=5> [accessed on: 10 June 2014]; V. Vătășianu, *Istoria artei feudale în Țările Române*, Vol. I, București 1959, pp. 105–107.

The church in Saschiz (Keisd) dates back to the same century, and it was primarily built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, in Romanesque style. In the years 1493–1525 Saxon colonists substituted it with a Gothic Cathedral of St. Stefan, erected in the honor of the Hungarian Monarch Stephen I of Hungary (969–1038). The church consists of a nave, loft and altar apse as well as three gates: western, southern and northern. It is also surrounded by a cemetery. The building was rebuilt a number of times in the 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>50</sup> Another church in Viscri (Deutschweisskirch)<sup>51</sup> also dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century and was built by the Saxon congregation at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century in place of the old Roman temple.<sup>52</sup>

A fortified Unitarian Church in Dârjiu (Székelyderzs, reg. Odorhei) dates back to the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It was erected in 1390 in a combination of Romanesque and Gothic styles, decorated with interior frescoes in 1419, presenting the legend of King Ladislaus I of Hungary.<sup>53</sup> A 15<sup>th</sup> century church, inscribed on the UNESCO list, is a fortified temple in Biertan (Birthälm, reg. Sibiu) located in a village that was one of the first inhabited by German settlers in Transylvania in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The church had been built in the years 1486–1524 as a monumental late Gothic Evangelical temple of St. Mary and rebuilt towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century by Masters from Vienna and Nurnberg.<sup>54</sup> It was the seat of Evangelical Bishopric of the region from the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The church has preserved a 15<sup>th</sup> century sculpted altar made by Master Johannes Reichmuth from Sighișoara and an incomplete 16<sup>th</sup> century wall polychrome. Another church inscribed on the UNESCO list is a fortified Saxon minster in Călnic (Kelling, reg. Alba) built as the seat of the governing duke Chyl de Kelling in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In

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<sup>50</sup> D.M. Istrate, *Biserica evanghelică din Saschiz, jud. Mureș. Cercetări arheologice (I)*, „Materiale și cercetări arheologice (serie nouă)”, 2010, VI, pp. 115–151, [http://www.academia.edu/6080615/Biserica\\_evangelica\\_din\\_Saschiz\\_jud.\\_Mureș.\\_Cercetari\\_arheologice\\_I\\_Evangelical\\_church\\_in\\_Saschiz](http://www.academia.edu/6080615/Biserica_evangelica_din_Saschiz_jud._Mureș._Cercetari_arheologice_I_Evangelical_church_in_Saschiz) [accessed on: 4 July 2014].

<sup>51</sup> G. Anghel, *Cetați medievale din Transilvania*. București: Editura Meridiane, 1972; H. Fabini, *Universul cetăților bisericești din Transilvania*, Sibiu 2009, p. 279; I. Catalui, *Biserici fortificate din județul Brașov*, Brașov 2008; *Transylvania village sites with fortified churches*, <http://www.cimec.ro/Monumente/unesco/UNESCOen/indexTrans.htm>, CIMEC, 2002–2003 [accessed on: 1 July 2014]; C. Plăiașu, *Apocalipsa bisericilor fortificate săsești este de neoprit, Historia*, [http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv\\_web/general/articol/apocalipsa-bisericilor-fortificate-sasesti-este-neoprit](http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv_web/general/articol/apocalipsa-bisericilor-fortificate-sasesti-este-neoprit) [accessed on: 9 June 2014]; *Castelarea Transilvaniei în secolul al XV-lea – performanțele de cercetare actuale*, [http://www.cetati.medievistica.ro/pagini/Castelani/texte/Castelarea\\_Rusu/Castelarea.htm](http://www.cetati.medievistica.ro/pagini/Castelani/texte/Castelarea_Rusu/Castelarea.htm) [accessed on: 8 June 2014].

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.biserici.org/index.php?menu=BI&code=6>; <http://www.patzinakia.com/MONUMENTA/VISCRI/> [accessed on: 7 July 2014].

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.biserici.org/index.php?menu=BI&code=1> [accessed on: 8 June 2014].

<sup>54</sup> *Biertan. Biserica Fortificată*, <http://www.biserici.org/index.php?menu=BI&code=313> [accessed on: 13 May 2014]; H. Derer, *op. cit.*, p. 25.



The Historical Center of Sighișoara,  
Romania  
Photo: Marian Hanik

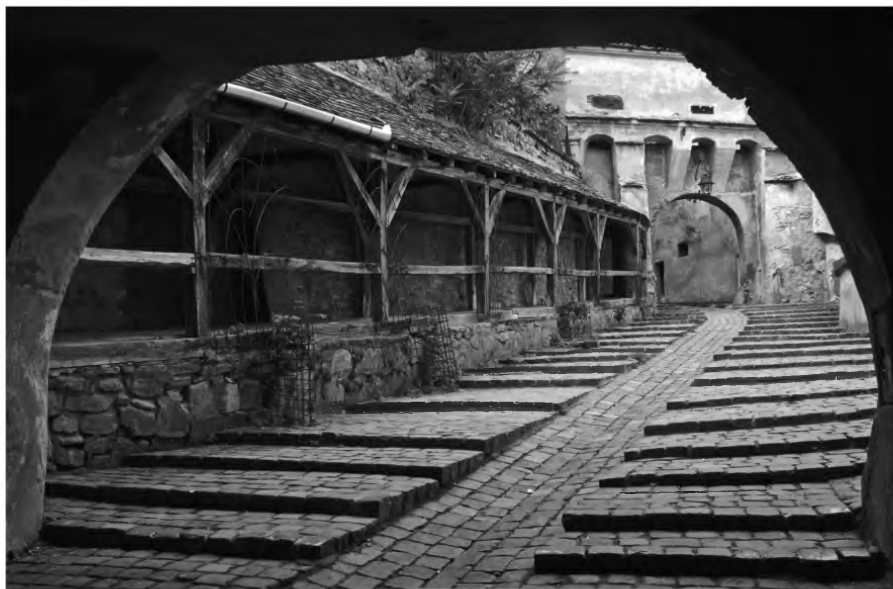
1430 the town and the church had been sold to the Saxon peasant community, who reconstructed the church and extended its fortification walls. Frescoes inside the chapel painted in the 16<sup>th</sup> century have been preserved until this day.<sup>55</sup> The church of St. Martin in Valea Viilor (Wurmloch), built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, most likely in 1414, bears the style of late Gothic. In the 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries the sanctuary was surrounded with strong fortification walls and three belfries.<sup>56</sup>

There is one urban monument included in the UNESCO world heritage record, namely the Historical Center of Sighișoara (*Centrul istoric al orașului Sighișoara*), inscribed on the list in 1999. The medieval town of Transylvania dates back its origins to possibly 13<sup>th</sup> century. Historical sources mention the city as a royal fortress protected at that time by the Székelys. Located between the Latin West and Byzantine East it became a great center of Transylvanian Saxons.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> *Câlnic (Kelling)*, <http://www.biserici.org/index.php?menu=BI&code=4>; <http://www.patzinakia.com/MONUMENTA/CALNIC/> [accessed on: 10 June 2014].

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.biserici.org/index.php?menu=BI&code=240> [accessed on: 10 June 2014].

<sup>57</sup> *Centrul istoric Sighișoara*, <http://patrimoniu.gov.ro/ro/monumente-istorice/lista-patrimonului-mondial-unesco/93-centrul-istoric-sighisoara> [accessed on: 23 May 2014].



The Historical Center of Sighișoara, Romania  
Photo: Marian Hanik

The town was a defense structure thus it was fortified by walls in the 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The defense measures also included 14 belfries, 9 still preserved until today: The Tower of Tailors, The Tower of Butchers, The Tower of Furriers, The Tower of Blacksmiths, The Tower with a Clock and The Tower of Undertakers. Although Saxons were the majority of town inhabitants it still bore a multicultural and multireligious character. The traces of diversity include the old Dominican Cloister (13<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries) devoted to St. Mary,<sup>58</sup> The Church of St. Nicholas in the Valley (*Biserica Sf. Nicolai din Deal*) dating back to between 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, representing the style of Transylvanian Gothic with 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century murals and a Catholic church from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of the exceptional features found in town are the beautiful tenement houses located in the Old City, dating back to 17<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries, which held the workshops of guilds and craftsmen.

Romanian discourse on monuments includes the ancient founding myth relating to the heritage of Dacians, Orthodox faith symbolizing commitment to original Christianity and gradually, the cultural heritage of various ethnicities inhabiting Romania, which becomes more and more discernible. It signi-

<sup>58</sup> *Biserica Mănăstirii*, <http://www.biserici.org/index.php?menu=BI&code=2716&nf=2> [accessed on: 23 May 2014].

fies the need of Romania, following the example of other European countries, to present its history through tangible heritage, its Dacian-Roman as well as Orthodox identity, and create new stories and new post-communist image with a clearly diversified nation inhabited by various ethnicities and religions.

*Translation from Polish – Natalia Nieć*

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